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Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

Synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies

Note by the Secretariat

The present document provides a synthesis of the voluntary submissions prepared by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in response to an invitation by the President of the Council, contained in her letter to the Chairs of those bodies dated 6 November 2017, for them to offer substantive inputs to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, highlighting their contributions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1] The integral texts of the submissions received in time for the present synthesis report are available on the forum's website.[2]

* E/HLPF/2018/1.

[1] The present document has benefited from contributions by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Population and Development, the Committee for Development Policy, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Committee on World Food Security, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the Human Rights Council, the Industrial Development Board of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Labour Organization, the International Trade Centre, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Council of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Man and the Biosphere Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Peacebuilding Commission, United Nations agencies supporting the implementation of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patters, the Climate Change Secretariat, the United Nations Environment Assembly, the United Nations Statistical Commission, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol, the World Bank Group, the World Trade Organization, the World Water Council and the World Summit on the Information Society Forum, coordinated and hosted by ITU.

[2] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/inputs/.

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I. Introduction

1. The present document is based on a synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in response to the invitation by the President of the Council contained in her letter to the Chairs of those bodies.

2. The invitation by the President of the Council is in line with the call in paragraph 85 of General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", for thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals to be held at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The thematic reviews will be supported by reviews by the functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums. In her letter, the President invited recipients to share relevant input and deliberations as to how they address the goals and targets from the perspective of the theme of the 2018 high-level political forum: "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

3. The invitation for contributions was addressed to the functional commissions and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council, as well as other intergovernmental bodies and forums, including global platforms and intergovernmental organization-driven mechanisms that contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. While the call for inputs did not include a focused request for thematic analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2018 high-level political forum, several commissions, platforms and other bodies included additional reflections on those particular goals. Those inputs provided qualitative analysis that can complement the quantitative analysis contained in the mandated progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. The present report reflects how the functional commissions and expert bodies of the Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums are responding to the theme of the 2018 high-level political forum and does not suggest a formal reporting link to the forum or modify any entity's mandate or governance. In their contributions, the entities analysed the lessons learned and the gaps and challenges and emerging issues related to the 2018 theme of "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

II. Assessment of the situation regarding the principle of "ensuring that no one is left behind" at the global level

6. Despite some progress made, the contributions received highlight that the world remains on a trajectory of increasing inequity and inequality, in terms of both economic resources and vulnerability to environmental degradation.

Poverty and hunger trends incompatible with leaving no one behind

7. Current trends do not point to a degree or speed of advance compatible with the time frame of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with regard to some of the fundamental elements that are key to leaving no one behind, including the trends in poverty, particularly in rural areas and low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, education, housing and others. The continued exclusion of vulnerable groups from the benefits of growth and from political processes in general has contributed to their increased vulnerability and limited their ability to continue investing in strengthening the resilience of their livelihoods. Not only are people and countries being left behind,

but in many different contexts they are being pushed further behind by a variety of forces, including globalization, technological developments and climate change and other forms of environmental degradation. Many countries, particularly least developed countries, still lack the productive capacity necessary to follow a path towards sustainable development.

8. Currently, many regions, countries and individuals lag behind others with respect to their access to and consumption of critical services, such as health, education, justice and information, among others. Significant inequalities in basic water and sanitation services also persist within individual countries, between urban and rural areas and among wealth quintiles.

9. Moreover, recent data indicate that the world is moving backwards with regard to the goals of the Zero Hunger Challenge and the elimination of all forms of malnutrition. The long-term trend of gradually improving global food security seems to have reversed, and conflicts are among the main drivers of that development. In terms of nutrition indicators, global progress on stunting and wasting continues to be slow, while rising rates of anaemia among women of reproductive age and the increase in the number of people who are overweight or obese throughout the world add to the concerns.

Leaving no one behind requires transformation of deeply rooted systems

10. The experiences of certain countries show that it is possible to make significant advances towards leaving no one behind in relatively short periods of time, yet a generalized shift towards inclusive sustainable development requires the transformation of deeply rooted systems, including economic and political systems, governance structures and business models, that are often based on unequal distributions of wealth and decision-making power. It is not enough to address inequality by focusing on those "left behind" at the bottom. It is also necessary to address the concentration of wealth, income and decision-making power at the top and to break the link between economic and social exclusion and decision-making power. The widening wealth and income inequalities among regions, countries and individuals and the lack of trust that permeates many societies jeopardizes efforts to leave no one behind.

Key constraints

11. As violent conflict hampers progress towards sustainable development, leaving no one behind requires a particular focus on conflict-affected countries. War and strife have led to the still-ongoing migrant and refugee crisis, which has culminated in more than 22.5 million refugees and an additional 65.3 internally displaced persons. A significant and increasing share of the extreme poor are living in conflict-affected countries, and women and children, the elderly and the disabled are affected the most. The situation requires not only addressing the root causes of violent conflict, but also ensuring that progress on the Sustainable Development Goals is made with respect to marginalized, excluded and difficult-to-reach populations.

12. While many countries recognize the legislative principle of non-discrimination on the basis of gender and sex, the principle of substantive equality between women and men is still not fully accepted and implemented in many regions of the world. Inequality in the family underlies all other aspects of discrimination against women and is often justified in the name of ideology, tradition and culture. Furthermore, the implementation of legal obligations and effective policies to prevent gender-based violence against women remains limited. Obstacles and restrictions that impede women from realizing their right to access to justice on the basis of equality persist.

The intersection of gender with other forms of disadvantage, such as race, class, ethnicity and sexuality, is scarcely considered.

13. Advancements have been achieved in increasing the representation of women in government; however, in many cases, the focus is on numbers rather than actual political power. Significant gaps in gender equality remain in decision-making processes, particularly in relation to economic empowerment, women's access to credit and collateral and unequal opportunities in the fields of education, training and property rights. Realizing women's economic rights requires going beyond the promotion of women's empowerment in the labour market to questions regarding the enforcement of labour rights, the quality of employment and the volatility of earnings. Unpaid care must be given due recognition in statistics and policy, as well as through public investment and anti-poverty programmes.

Vulnerability of migrants

14. Migrants can be, depending on the specific context, one of the most vulnerable groups of a society and are therefore often at risk of being left behind. At the same time, high numbers of migrants, including internal migrants and forcibly displaced persons, can add pressure on already scarce resources in host communities. Thus, ensuring access to resources for all parts of the population, newcomers and locals alike, is critical. It is equally important, however, to emphasize the contributions of migrants to the national budgets of their destination countries, and encourage their development through labour and increase their economic competences. Particular attention should also be paid to migrants' access to social protection schemes, as many are entitled to social security benefits but cannot transfer them internationally.

15. Leaving no one behind also requires enhancing the resilience and reducing the risks of persons being forcibly displaced as a result of climate change and natural disasters. Land degradation, water scarcity and transboundary pests and diseases, floods and other natural and human-caused disasters affect the most vulnerable in a disproportionate way, severely affecting their food security and threatening the sustainability of agriculture systems, in addition to causing the loss of living resources and biodiversity. On the one hand, migration in such a context may increase peoples' vulnerabilities, especially when it happens in a forced and improvised way. On the other hand, such migration can allow people to build resilience when it is conducted in a proactive and voluntary way.

16. Those who do not have the resources to move or build a new livelihood elsewhere are particularly vulnerable. Such circumstances may concern persons, groups or communities who have low incomes or no income at all, such as children and youth, unemployed, elderly, ill or disabled people and, in some contexts, women. Increased vulnerability can intensify competition for scarce natural resources, instability and conflict. More than 1.3 billion people are trapped on degrading agricultural land: farmers on marginal land, especially in the drylands, have limited options for alternative livelihoods and are often excluded from the wider infrastructure and economic development of a nation.

Land degradation and biodiversity loss as barriers

17. Land degradation acts as a barrier to ensuring that no one is left behind. Some 40 per cent of the world's poor rely on degraded lands for essential services. Restoring their productive capacity would therefore significantly reduce the economic vulnerability of the poorest and help promote long-term development for all. Policies that recognize that healthy and productive land is an important linchpin of society would be a significant contribution to ensuring that no one is left behind.

18. The loss of biodiversity-dependent ecosystem services has disproportionate effects on people who are vulnerable for other reasons (such as gender, age, disability, poverty and minority status). Similarly, pollution disproportionately affects the poor and the vulnerable. The degradation and loss of biodiversity often result from and reinforce existing patterns of discrimination. For indigenous peoples, forest-dwellers, fisherfolk and others who rely directly on the products of forests, rivers, lakes and oceans for their food, fuel and medicine, environmental harm can and often does have disastrous consequences.

19. Biodiversity and cultural diversity are intricately linked. In many societies, women have specific knowledge on biodiversity and apply it in a sustainable manner. However, their role in biodiversity management and the decision-making process may not be properly recognized or capitalized upon. Likewise, many religions call on all human beings to be stewards of the riches of the natural world. However, the loss of particular places is felt predominantly by those who associate their sacred rituals and sites with those locations. Food and shelter may be replaced, but the destruction of a sacred grove may cause irreparable harm.

Competitiveness of small firms

20. Representing more than 90 per cent of all enterprises and more than 70 per cent of jobs, micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises tend to employ people in the most vulnerable segments of society, including women and youth. The enterprises that are integrated into global markets are more productive than those that do not participate in international trade. International trade has contributed to lifting 1 billion people out of poverty since 1990, yet they face significant risks, including a rise in protectionist sentiments and policies. Strengthening the competitiveness of those enterprises is a precondition for higher wages and better working conditions in the firms that collectively employ the most workers in any economy, and is therefore a precondition for inclusive growth. Together, international trade and improved competitiveness of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises are important preconditions for ensuring that no one is left behind.

Digital divides persist

21. In a global economy that is becoming more connected than ever, the digital divide, including the gender digital divide, threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities. The latest data on information and communications technology (ICT) development show continued progress in the connectivity and use of such technologies. However, there are substantial divides in terms of the access and use of Internet and other ICT services between regions and countries. There are twice as many mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in developed countries compared with developing countries, while the gap in connectivity in terms of developing countries versus least developed countries has grown in recent years. Mobile broadband subscription rates are much higher in Europe and the Americas than in other regions, and more than three times those in Africa. For fixed broadband, in particular high-speed fixed broadband, the divide is even larger. Even though mobile broadband prices decreased more in least developed countries than in other regions, they represent more than 5 per cent of gross national income (GNI) per capita in most least developed countries and are therefore unaffordable for most of the population.

22. Digital divides within countries are also more persistent in developing countries. Rural areas in some developing countries still do not have adequate access to telephone or mobile phone services, and therefore have limited or no access to the Internet. Moreover, a significant gender digital divide persists. Worldwide, the proportion of women using the Internet is 12 per cent lower than that of men, but in

least developed countries that proportion is 28 per cent lower. While the gender gap has narrowed in most regions since 2013, it has widened in Africa.

III. Gaps, challenges, risks and emerging issues

A. Cross-cutting and emerging issues

Biodiversity

23. Biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate, and some submissions stress that the world may be facing its sixth mass extinction. Conserving biodiversity, maintaining or restoring the resilience of ecosystems and safeguarding the planet's variety of life are considered fundamental to a global transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies. Addressing biodiversity loss requires integrated policy approaches, as the main drivers behind biodiversity loss cut across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Currently, however, most policies directed at addressing biodiversity are fragmented and target-specific. The mainstreaming of biodiversity into development policies, plans, and programmes can improve efforts to achieve both the Aichi Biodiversity Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Development Goals.

24. Unsustainable practices in agriculture and forestry, such as pollution by fertilizers, chemicals and pesticides, the conversion of habitats and excessive water withdrawal, cause substantial environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. In addition, rapid urbanization and infrastructure development often harm biodiversity by expanding built-up land use and changing consumption patterns, which in turn leads to an increased ecological footprint. Climate change will have a broad range of impacts on biodiversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels, including shifts in the distribution of species and ecosystems, changes in species abundance and an increased risk of extinctions.

Climate change

25. The risk that climate change poses to sustainable development is highlighted in many contributions, reaffirming the critical link between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Taking action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in human societies and settlements is critical to ensuring that human development is not jeopardized and that the world's growing population can thrive where they live. In that regard, one important trend is the emergence of local actors as leaders. More than 2,500 cities have already reported their commitments to both mitigation and adaptation on the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action platform, showing that many cities are already taking climate action.

26. A key method for countries to build resilience and enable adaptation in human settlements is through the process of formulating and implementing national adaptation plans, including by linking national and local adaptation planning and supporting the role of local governments in planning and implementing adaptation in human settlements. National adaptation plans provide an opportunity to emphasize human societies and settlements in national adaptation strategies and foster further adaptation action by local governments in cities, towns and villages of all sizes.

Conflict

27. Conflict continues to be a key obstacle to achieving sustainable development in all its dimensions. With the increase in the number and intensity of violent conflicts in recent years, addressing root causes is more urgent than ever. A focus on the

political consensus for peace is paramount in order to bridge the safety and security gap in post-conflict contexts. Reinforcing a society's commitment to peace and sustainable development requires forms of governance that facilitate pluralism, suppress hate and discrimination and view governance as an institution that provides value.

28. Conflicts and situations of instability exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination against women and girls, exposing them to heightened risks of violations of their human rights, including through sexual violence as a tactic of war. Violence against women and girls also spikes in post-conflict societies as a result the general breakdown of the rule of law, the availability of small arms, the breakdown of social and family structures and the "normalization" of gender-based violence as an additional element of pre-existing discrimination.

29. The close linkages between conflicts and migration warrant the urgent attention of policymakers. Migrants and refugees are often subject to human trafficking, smuggling and other threats. At the same time, the increase in conflicts also increases the number of policies that address migration primarily through a "security" lens, which gives less attention to the rights of migrants and the potential benefits of migration to host countries.

Data

30. Unreliable or non-existent data undermine the capacity to plan and monitor the development actions necessary to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is therefore an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems, especially in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and other countries in vulnerable situations, to meet the data demands for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. Submissions indicate that there are widespread activities to build capacities by improving data production through household surveys, civil registration and the collection of vital statistics. Partnerships with big data providers, particularly mobile phone operators, are expected to utilize big data not only from mobile phones but from all devices connected to the Internet (the Internet of things).

31. Beyond data provision, statistical networks foster collaboration to build the skills that need to be developed or strengthened in national statistical systems to address the new data demands. The statistical community has also begun to close gaps with regard to the availability of disaggregated data needed to ensure that no one is left behind, particularly in the areas of ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data, data on migration and refugees and disability statistics.

32. It is important to balance the protection of confidentiality and the openness of data, and the societal challenges of trust, ethics, privacy, confidentiality and the security of data need to be addressed. That requires the provision of guidance and tools to countries as they establish open data practices.

33. Ongoing work and consultation at the global level on climate change statistics and indicators and disaster-related statistics in the context of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 will improve the basis for evidence-based decision-making in those key areas. Integrating environmental and economic information into the accounting framework of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), including the revision of the SEEA Experimental Ecosystem Accounting framework, provides a powerful tool to assess the contribution of the environment to the economy and the impacts of the economy on the environment, thereby informing integrated policies.

Governance

34. Submissions to the report highlight an urgent need for countries to strengthen their governance and institutional capacities, including their financial resources, human capital and technical know-how, as well as to continuously improve their public service delivery models in line with people's changing needs. The decentralization of governance structures can lead to stronger collaboration, coordination, participation, inclusiveness, integration and resilience, but it requires the training of public servants.

35. Technological advances within the "fourth industrial revolution" can be harnessed for training and can also be instrumental in reducing the cost of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Investment in the ICT-enabled provision of public services at the local level can be encouraged and can also support improvements in the quality of public services, the promotion of transparency and the facilitation of the establishment and use of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Local governments should not be regarded as subcontractors of the national and regional governments, but should have the capacity to take appropriate decisions, raise funds and collect taxes.

Migration

36. Migration is a significant global megatrend, leading to diverse challenges faced by countries of origin, transit and destination. While there exists a wide range of drivers of migration, there is widespread agreement regarding the need to address the negative drivers of migration, such as poverty, lack of opportunity, epidemic disease, discrimination, violence, insecurity and climate change.

37. Some submissions report widespread agreement among Member States that the human rights of migrants and refugees must be protected and fulfilled, and that human trafficking, exploitation and modern forms of slavery must be combated and eliminated. Other submissions, however, express the view that the protection of the rights of migrants remains a topic that receives little attention from governments and other stakeholders. In particular, little attention is paid to the families of migrant workers who stay in the country of origin, migrants in transit and migrants in "normal" situations who often continue to face challenges when integrating into host communities.

38. The challenges of international migration, such as providing migrants with access to basic social services and adequate housing, are balanced by a common perception that well-managed migration contributes to development and economic growth. However, countries have to create conditions that enable migrants and their families to contribute to the development of their host communities as well as their countries of origin.

New technologies

39. The world is experiencing rapid growth of digital developments and trends, such as artificial intelligence, cyberphysical systems, big data and blockchain technologies. The speed of change in the fourth industrial revolution has no historical precedent. Technology and digitization are rapidly disrupting entire systems of production and consumption at the global level, with both positive and negative consequences. Awareness of those trends is vital, given that they could have major implications for the development of sustainable societies. Governments therefore need to be agile in adopting policies fast enough to provide an enabling environment for innovation, as well as ensuring that its citizens and country will be protected from potential adverse impacts.

40. To harness the benefits of new technologies, countries will need to create conditions that support the deployment of next-generation network and service infrastructures. They will also have to adopt policies that are conducive to experimentation and innovation but mitigate potential risks to information security, privacy and employment.

41. One area in which regulatory reforms could harness new technologies for sustainable development is digital financial inclusion. Currently, the full potential of mobile money has not yet been realized: 2 billion people in developing countries, 1.6 billion of whom have access to a mobile phone, still lack a viable alternative to the cash economy and informal financial services. Various regulatory measures can be considered at the national level to leverage the potential of two-sided platforms for enabling digital financial inclusion. The harmonization of legal and regulatory requirements for digital financial services at the regional or subregional level can have a multiplier effect on innovation and investment in national markets.

42. However, while information and communications technologies promise to contribute to advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, modern societies have developed a growing dependency on those technologies in their daily operations and management of critical infrastructure. That creates risks that need to be addressed at all levels, national, regional and international, in collaboration with all stakeholders. If a society does not have confidence in such technologies, or has concerns about their security, the lack of trust can hinder the adoption of those technologies and minimize their positive impact on a country's development process. It is especially important to protect the vulnerable, particularly children, as one in three Internet users is under the age of 18.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

43. Women and girls provide important contributions to sustainable development. Therefore, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and women's full and equal participation and leadership in the economy, are vital to achieving sustainable development, promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, enhancing sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and productivity, ending poverty in all its forms everywhere and ensuring the well-being of all.

44. Rural women and girls face growing gaps in equality of opportunity and limited access to universal health-care services and secondary and post-secondary education and challenges such as gender-based violence, discriminatory laws and policies and negative social norms and gender stereotypes. The unequal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work constitutes a further challenge.

45. The linkages between gender inequalities and the challenges posed by climate change to poverty eradication and the achievement of sustainable development also require urgent attention. In particular, rural women and girls, especially in developing countries, including small island developing States, are often disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, extreme weather events and natural disasters and other environmental issues.

46. The situation calls for strengthening and building the resilience and adaptive capacity of all rural women and girls to respond to and recover from economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters, humanitarian emergencies and the adverse impacts of climate change, natural disasters and extreme weather events. Some of the measures needed to achieve those goals include the provision of essential infrastructure, services, appropriate financing and technology, and the establishment of social protection, humanitarian relief, forecast and early warning systems and decent work for women.

B. Sustainable Development Goals in focus

47. The transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Goals lies in the interlinkages between the Goals and the recognition of the multidimensional nature of contemporary challenges. While all the Goals were examined through the lens of the theme of the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development, some entities focused their contributions on the specific set of Goals under review in 2018.

Sustainable Development Goal 6: ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

48. Water security is a prerequisite to the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals, even beyond Goal 6. Without water, there can be no food, energy, production, development, equity, climate resilience or urban or environmental harmony, and poverty reduction is impossible. Therefore, water resources should be managed and regulated in a holistic, systemic, and consultative way across silos and at different levels, ensuring that interdependent management choices yield the most positive outcomes, drive technological, institutional and financial innovations across sectors and enable collaboration between institutions and stakeholders, both inside and outside the water sector. Stronger political leadership and commitment are essential to promoting water as a key component of sustainable development.

49. Water availability will become an increasing challenge to global food security and nutrition, as irrigated agriculture uses the most water globally, accounting for up to 70 per cent of global freshwater withdrawals (with significant difference between countries), some of which are from non-renewable sources. Promoting the sustainable management and conservation of ecosystems for the continued availability, quality and reliability of water for food security and nutrition is essential, and is key to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6.

50. A significant percentage of disease burdens could be prevented through access to a safe water supply, adequate sanitation services and better hygiene (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All) practices. Some 892 million people worldwide still practice open defecation. The decline in rates of open defecation in rural areas would need to double to meet target 6.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 6. Diarrhoeal disease alone accounts for an estimated 3.6 per cent of the global burden of disease measured in disability-adjusted life years, and is responsible for the deaths of 1.5 million people every year. It is estimated that 58 per cent of that burden, or 842,000 deaths per year, is attributable to unsafe water supply, sanitation and hygiene.

51. Antimicrobial resistance has emerged as an issue threatening public health and sustainable development. A significant factor contributing to that situation is the fact that domestic and agricultural solid waste and wastewater often end up in the natural environment. Precautionary measures need to be taken to reduce the overall use of antibiotics while improving sewage and wastewater management in critical hotspots such as hospitals, drug manufacturing sites and agricultural sources.

52. New, sustainable multipurpose water infrastructure needs to be developed in line with local realities, and existing, ageing infrastructure needs to be maintained. There is a huge funding gap, as the water and sanitation sector requires six times more financing than the current funding provided by governments, the private sector and donors. Using public funding more effectively to leverage additional resources and to blend public or donors' funds with commercial finance is considered critical in that regard, which in some cases also requires complementary regulatory reforms.

53. Integrated water resources management policies, strategies and plans will be critical to help ensure a cross-cutting approach in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, fostering such management in transboundary settings, on the basis of international water laws and their key principles, is cost effective and enables benefit-sharing across administrative borders. Integrated water resources management strategies can be supported by ICT as an important means for smart water management, facilitating the measurement and monitoring of water supplies and policy interventions, and enabling practitioners at the local level to ensure the equitable and sustainable extension of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All services.

54. Access to safe water and sanitation is a human right and a direct and indirect source of decent jobs. Unsustainable production processes affecting the quantity and quality of water resources through overuse and pollution are threats to the jobs and livelihoods of people, and thereby undermine the resilience of societies. The availability or lack of water, and to a lesser extent sanitation, can shape people's willingness and ability to migrate. Migrants face specific barriers in accessing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All services, and pose specific challenges to service providers and host governments. It is therefore critical to cover migrants and host communities alike, ensuring the participation of local communities in water and sanitation management.

Sustainable Development Goal 7: ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

55. Nearly 1 billion people worldwide live without electricity. While significant progress has been made, it is projected that about 780 million people could still remain off the grid in 2030. The lack of affordable and reliable energy is one of the most critical challenges that businesses face in developing countries. Accelerated efforts to expand access to electricity through scaling up investments in both on-the-grid and off-the-grid solutions is therefore critical.

56. Solar energy was among the first renewable energy technologies adopted globally to meet the basic electricity needs of off-the-grid populations. Recently, there have been successful roll-outs of solar products with improved batteries, lower capital costs, affordable financing and easy access to pay-as-you-go schemes, targeting low-income customers in Africa and Asia, where at least 95 per cent of the world's off-the-grid population resides. With enabling policies and regulations on renewable energy and a clear vision of future possibilities, off-the-grid solar energy could be key to achieving universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

57. Moreover, improved energy efficiency was highlighted as a critical component of Sustainable Development Goal 7. The implementation of energy-efficient policies in manufacturing increases the competitiveness of manufactured products and economic productivity on the global market while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, the potential offered by ICT and energy efficiency can be connected both by the "Greening of ICT" and by "Greening through ICT". In the first case, information and communications technologies are being transformed and developed to be more environmentally sound and less carbon-intensive. In the second case, ICT-enabled solutions, for example smart grids, smart buildings, smart logistics and industrial processes, are helping to move the world towards a more sustainable and energy-efficient future. Green technologies and processes have the potential to significantly reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

58. Air pollution, mainly from transport, the burning of waste, agriculture, energy use in buildings, industry, power production and forest fires, but also from inefficient cookstove technologies and fuels, is considered a global public health emergency,

causing about 6.5 million deaths a year or one in eight of all deaths. Some 92 per cent of the world's population lives in places where air quality exceeds the limits set by the World Health Organization. It is one of the largest causes of the four main non-communicable diseases — stroke, lung cancer, chronic respiratory disease and heart disease — accounting for between one quarter and one third of those deaths.

59. Industry is an important stakeholder in achieving the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 7. However, many challenges remain in order for industrial development to meaningfully contribute to the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies, particularly in the areas of innovative clean technologies and the robust integration of renewable energy sources into existing energy infrastructure on a global scale.

60. The integration of renewable and smart energy systems into industrial policy is an option for harnessing the synergies between Sustainable Development Goals 7 and 9. It is useful to explore engagement with the private sector to scale up investments, devise a clear structure regarding ways to enable decentralized electrification and recognize the important role the public sector has in setting regulatory frameworks for private sector interventions. Cheaper and cleaner technologies often depend on legal and regulatory frameworks that can accommodate them while also incentivizing private sector participation. Improving access to clean energy also requires skilled workers and productive enterprises. Knowledge-sharing and capacity-building are therefore key factors in ensuring the effectiveness and success of technology transfers intended to help create sustainable energy systems. Finally, awareness-raising, supported by well-designed policies, will support progress towards sustainability.

61. To address possible trade-offs between sustainable development objectives, it is critical to involve all relevant stakeholders in policymaking aimed at enhancing access to energy services. In the context of bioenergy development, for example, it should be ensured that food security and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food are priority concerns, with a special focus on women and smallholder producers.

Sustainable Development Goal 11: make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

62. By 2050, the urban population will have doubled its current size, and nearly 70 per cent of the world's population will live in cities. As more than half the world's people already live in urban environments, making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable is one of the most salient challenges of our times, but it is also an objective that has large economic, social and environmental returns.

63. Contributions received highlight three essential elements for successfully implementing Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda: financing the New Urban Agenda, promoting territorial development and building resilience to natural disasters and climate change. The global investment needed for urban infrastructure is $4.5 trillion to $5.4 trillion per year (including a premium ranging from 9 to 17 per cent to make such infrastructure low-emission and climate-resilient), most of which lies in the developing world. Assisting cities in expanding their access to finance from multiple sources, including local taxes, fiscal transfers and private and commercial finance, is therefore a key goal, which in turn may require the adoption of conducive regulatory and financial frameworks. Innovative ways of leveraging investment from private and non-traditional sources are also needed.

64. The required investments in low-carbon infrastructure, green construction and retrofitting and refurbishing buildings to make cities sustainable can generate new

opportunities for job creation. In that context, the integration of the principles of the decent work agenda into the Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All is considered critical. Information and communications technologies can be essential in offering innovative approaches to managing cities more effectively and holistically through applications such as smart buildings, smart water management, intelligent transport systems and new efficiencies in energy consumption and waste management.

65. Improving connectivity among cities allows faster economic growth and links people to better jobs. There is also a need to consider greater connectivity and interdependence across rural and urban areas, including in the agrifood sector. Working towards the transformation of food systems that link rural and urban areas for their mutual economic, social, environmental and health benefits is considered a critical component for shifting the world onto a sustainable and resilient path.

66. There is also extensive evidence that urban planning and decisions in city infrastructure and development will affect the health of generations to come and play a crucial role in ensuring the right to health, which promotes well-being and quality of life for all citizens. That can be achieved by mainstreaming equity through indivisible and intersectoral action in all goals that have an impact on urban health, so as to leave no one behind.

67. The sustainable management of urban and peri-urban forests and trees and their integration into urban planning can significantly contribute to people's health and well-being and to tackling climate change. To deliver all benefits, urban forests require adequate governance through inclusive policies, clear norms and sound planning, with the involvement of all stakeholders, as well as a mix of public and private funding and citizen involvement.

68. A promising approach for integrating migration into human settlement planning from the very beginning, so as to maximize its potential and minimize its risks, is to create an integrated and participatory process to reach integration goals and inclusive access to services, housing and resources that includes the local population and migrants equally. Despite their enormous potential, internal migrants are often neglected in formal government policies at local and national levels. Integrated regional development planning should strengthen the role of migrants as development agents who naturally link urban and rural areas.

Sustainable Development Goal 12: ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

69. Sustainable consumption and production is one of the most cost-efficient and effective ways to achieve economic development, reduce impacts on the environment and advance human well-being. The objective of securing sustainable consumption and production patterns is also transversal in nature, in the context of both economic sectors and the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 12 should be seen as an enabler for the implementation of a range of other Goals and their targets.

70. Food losses and waste have an impact on the sustainability and resilience of agriculture and food systems and their ability to ensure food security and nutrition for all for present and future generations. All concerned stakeholders should develop effective strategies and innovations to reduce food losses and waste. Sustainable transformation of the livestock sector is also needed. Existing guidelines recognize pastoral systems in particular and call for their protection and support, as well as for enhancing the role of grazing systems, leveraging the potential of livestock as a means for sustainable livelihoods for smallholders and promoting the sustainability of intensive systems.

71. Voluntary guidelines for food systems and nutrition are expected to offer support to countries with regard to developing policies that incentivize more sustainable and healthy diets for all and are underpinned by sustainable food systems. The application of existing international standards, guidelines and codes of practice relating to foods, food production and food safety play a key role in that regard.

72. The phasing out of ozone-depleting substances has resulted in changes to production and consumption patterns and stimulated more efficient production processes, as has the innovative redesigning of products and equipment to use greener chemicals. While data are only available for a small number of chemical exposures, it is estimated that 1.3 million lives and 43 million disability-adjusted life years were lost in 2012 as a result of exposures to selected chemicals.

73. Nanomaterials are ever-present in what humans regularly consume. While nanotechnology has been emerging for some decades, ongoing research now allows for the production of conventional materials at a miniscule scale. The use of nanomaterials may not be effectively addressed by regulatory frameworks, as questions have arisen, and remain only partially answered, about the health and environmental risks of those materials.

74. Increased dematerialization (i.e., the fact that, as a result of advances in technologies, fewer consumer products need to be in material form and/or that consumer products require fewer material inputs) and virtualization, as well as innovative ICT applications, can enable sustainable production and consumption. Cloud computing, smart grids, smart metering and the reduced energy consumption of ICT devices all have a positive impact on reducing our consumption. However, those technologies themselves require energy consumption. Therefore, effective policies are needed to ensure that the negative impacts of such technologies, such as electronic waste, are minimized.

75. Unsustainable production and consumption patterns have a negative impact on the environment and on livelihood conditions and can be one of several factors that lead people to leave their places of residence. From the perspective of migration development, policies need to take into account migration decision-making dynamics linked to production and consumption patterns.

76. Societies are resilient when decent jobs are available and can be created in the future in a context of inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth. More resource-efficient production generates room for productivity increases that can have positive effects on the value added to those products and therefore on workers' remuneration. Without the involvement of workers and enterprises, many Sustainable Development Goals will prove difficult to achieve, as setting regulation or taxes alone is insufficient. Particular attention to micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises is needed, as such enterprises face greater challenges with regard to enhancing their resource and energy efficiency.

Sustainable Development Goal 15: protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

77. A significant proportion of managed and natural land-based ecosystems are experiencing degradation. Over the past two decades, approximately 20 to 30 per cent of the Earth's vegetated surface has experienced persistent declining trends in productivity, mainly because of land and water use and management practices. Evidence suggests that land degradation and conversion have led to a loss of $4.3 trillion to $20.2 trillion a year in the value of ecosystem goods and services. More directly, 1.5 billion people are affected by the world's estimated 2 billion hectares of deforested and degraded land. Achieving a world that is neutral in terms

of land degradation, through the sustainable management and restoration of our landscapes, will deliver many benefits, from conserving biodiversity and combating climate change to ensuring economic growth and human well-being.

78. Biodiversity loss and climate change further jeopardize the future health and productivity of land: higher carbon emissions and temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, soil erosion, biodiversity loss and increased water scarcity will likely alter the suitability for food production and human habitation of vast regions. Land degradation occurs in all parts of the terrestrial world and can take many forms. Combating land degradation and restoring degraded land is therefore an urgent priority for meeting not only Sustainable Development Goal 15 but also for creating the nature-based solutions needed to build sustainable and resilient societies.

79. The loss of world biodiversity and ecosystem degradation are threats to the human living environment, which includes health, economic activity and jobs, and have significant distributional impacts that affect various groups of producers and workers. Protecting and restoring ecosystems therefore need to go hand in hand with the promotion of alternative sources of jobs, income and livelihoods.

80. Globally, the fruits of the land comprise 80 per cent of our diet, and millions rely directly on agriculture for their survival, livelihoods and security. The conversion of land for agricultural use, driven by increased demand and land degradation, remains the main cause of global deforestation, accounting for 70 to 80 per cent of total forest loss, and has an adverse impact on the environment and livelihoods of millions of indigenous peoples, local communities and smallholders. The cultivation of tobacco leads to deforestation, as slash-and-burn techniques are used to clear forests to create tobacco fields and trees release their stored carbon into the atmosphere as they burn. In general, legal, inclusive and sustainable value chains in agriculture and forestry that prevent deforestation and degradation should be promoted and scaled up. The role of forests and trees in achieving food security and nutrition should be strengthened in its four dimensions (access, availability, utilization and stability), directly linking Sustainable Development Goals 15 and 2.

81. The designation and management of protected areas is the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation. Despite an increase in the total number and surface area of protected areas in the world, biodiversity continues to decline dramatically, in part due to the limited resources available to maintain those areas as strictly protected and/or to enforce relevant legal frameworks. In addition, current protected area networks may need to be realigned to account for climate change.

82. Biosphere reserves provide an integrated landscape/seascape approach to conservation planning, which is essential to ensuring suitable habitats for marine and terrestrial species. Despite the availability of sufficient knowledge to halt biodiversity erosion, gaps in knowledge and data remain regarding the trends and drivers for many ecosystems and species. Interdisciplinary research and data sharing are needed to fill knowledge gaps and identify policy responses that take into account knowledge, economic paradigms and cultural norms.

83. The lack of secure tenure often inhibits smallholder farmers from adopting sustainable management practices and investing in the long-term health of the land, and can lead to conflict and environmental degradation when competing users fight for control of those resources. The mismanagement and overexploitation of land and water resources often leads to serious disruptions in social and economic activity in the land-based sectors, exacerbating joblessness and contributing to famine and drought, forced migration, poverty and conflict.

84. Unsustainable land management practices, among other factors, also exacerbate the phenomena of sand and dust storms. The latter have global implications, causing

chronic health problems, damage to agriculture and infrastructure, intensified soil erosion and economic losses of millions of dollars every year. Integrated strategies that promote sustainable land and water management, ecosystem restoration and climate change adaptation can help reduce and mitigate the threats that originate from sand and dust storms over the long term.

85. As women are strategic agents of change and play a central role in the protection and restoration of land resources to provide for household needs, measures to mainstream a gender perspective in land policies are essential. Youth should also be empowered to realize the full value of forests and halt and reverse deforestation. Progress requires developing the technical and business capacities of all stakeholders, therefore forestry education at all levels should be strengthened, as should the education of consumers of forest products about sustainability.

Sustainable Development Goal 17: strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

86. As highlighted in many contributions, there remains a significant funding gap with regard to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Submissions highlight the fact that raising awareness and getting capital market investors to focus on aligning the projects and activities that they fund with the Goals is key. Multilateral development banks treat climate change and environmental sustainability as cross-cutting issues that are increasingly mainstreamed in the project design process. Similarly, support provided by international financial institutions helps countries develop and execute financing plans for their national development plans, and strengthens the capacity of governments to implement those plans.

87. Best practices and tools are available, but their application must be promoted, including through capacity-building and multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve and sustain the shift towards sustainable and resilient societies. Access to science through international cooperation as well as coordinated and targeted capacity-building programmes are required to ensure that national entities can plan effectively for targeted participation in international standard setting, in accordance with national needs.

88. In that context, it is critical that new doors be opened for women entrepreneurs across the developing world through collaborative partnerships among governments, multilateral development banks and other stakeholders to help maximize private sector financing for development. Existing projects support women entrepreneurs by creating and scaling up access to financial products and services, building capacity, increasing access to networks and mentors and providing opportunities to link with domestic and global markets. Those projects also support governments in addressing the legal barriers and regulations that can, sometimes inadvertently, discriminate against women.

89. Submissions highlight that migration can benefit all actors involved. To develop well-managed migration policies and to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration, an increase of the availability of data disaggregated by migratory status (target 17.18) is needed. Remittances are the most direct and well-known link between migration and development. The reduction of remittance costs must be fostered in order to increase their development impact. Migrants who engage as entrepreneurs and employees of local companies can support innovation as a result of their knowledge of different societies and markets.

90. Domestic resource mobilization is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. However, tax evasion, illicit financial flows and cross-border corruption and crime not only seriously reduce the ability of countries to manage domestic public finances, they also feed negative sentiment towards globalization.

That threatens support for an open multilateral trading system and the harnessing of international trade as an engine for inclusive and sustainable growth and development.

IV. Lessons learned on the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

91. Submissions share the concern that the international community needs to be better at supporting transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. That includes addressing the root causes of violent conflict in order to build and sustain peace at all stages of conflict, with the aim of preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. That requires changing the prevailing pattern of being in a state of crisis management (i.e., reacting to events rather than proactively addressing the drivers of conflict), and supporting the long-term capacities and institutions that are required for sustainable peace and development.

92. Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also requires significant departures from the usual way of administering public affairs. It calls for radical shifts in understanding administration and building capacities. It demands institutionalized measures to engage the public sector workforce in creativity and innovation. Semi-independent centres and specialized innovation structures within the public sector can incubate innovations for the public sector. While the value of multi-stakeholder forums and approaches is well understood, consolidating and sustaining effective multi-stakeholder engagement is often challenging.

93. The contributions received demonstrate that resilience is not an isolated policy area, and requires moving towards a "whole of government" or "whole of society" approach. It is through participation and meaningful engagement that individuals in a group become members of a community. Such interactions facilitate the flow of information and knowledge necessary to address challenges. Multidimensional participatory approaches to governance include the adoption of combinations of top-down, bottom-up and transversal approaches to give voice to the vulnerable by engaging them in the search for, design and implementation of and follow-up to creative solutions to development challenges through shared action and the ownership of outcomes. Participatory decision-making and inclusive service delivery are key in that regard. They can contribute to developing an open government system as a model of governance that focuses on the most vulnerable and establishes a new relationship between State and society.

94. As showcased by several submissions, building sustainable and resilient societies requires ensuring the inherent rights and dignity of migrants. While there are substantial benefits that societies can receive from migration, such as boosting the development and economic growth of States and promoting the multiculturalism of societies, the protection of human rights of migrants also poses a significant challenge that must be addressed. Research shows that societies transform through knowledge, and knowledge is a type of technology, alongside tools and blueprints. Migrant workers are bearers of that tacit knowledge, and societies develop as they adopt a more open-door policy to migration and create conducive conditions for learning. For societies to be sustainable, resilient and inclusive, it is therefore important to strengthen and build up strong multilateral partnerships that include countries of destination, transit and origin, and to ensure the protection of all human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status.

95. There is now a clear understanding that the deep structural transformation necessary for the transition to more environmentally and economically sustainable

and inclusive growth implies profound social changes and job transformation. That reaffirms the importance of ensuring the participation of workers and employers in the transformation. Submissions also demonstrate that it is critical to focus not only on the symptoms and manifestations of women's exclusion (e.g., lack of income, education or health), but also on their structural causes (e.g., discrimination, lack of access to justice and to resources and lack of representation) to allow for the understanding of the real contribution of women to sustainable development.

96. Resource-efficient approaches are an important component of the resilience equation, as the process of building resilience can offer opportunities to build resource efficiency and vice versa. Sustainable development requires integrated approaches to food, feed, fibre and fuel production applied at a much greater scale than today. A shift from the current "age of plunder" towards an "age of respect" for biophysical limits needs to be catalysed. This new age would require a transformation in the way people consume, produce, work and live together to address major pressures on land resources and associated environmental issues.

97. Recent major multilateral frameworks reflect the importance of local action and the shift of attitudes by national governments towards local action. The level of ambition demonstrated by cities and subnational authorities has paved the way for or reinforced national commitments and actions, making them a powerful mechanism for positive change at all levels of governance.

V. Areas where political guidance by the high-level political forum is required

98. The high-level political forum serves as the apex platform for the review of and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals. The inputs received from the various functional commissions and expert bodies of the Economic and Social Council, as well as other intergovernmental bodies and forums, demonstrate that the entities have mainstreamed the Goals in their respective areas of work. Many inputs called for the high-level political forum to support the policy frameworks and guidelines developed by the various intergovernmental bodies, a call that further underscores the important role the forum could play in coordinating and supporting action for sustainable development. Political guidance in the areas below was also identified as critical to accelerating progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Policy coherence and integration

99. The indivisibility and the urgency of the Sustainable Development Goals make policy and institutional coherence a priority and require a call for better coordination and sharing of experience among all relevant actors. Guidance by the high-level political forum is considered critical in that regard as fragmentation and silo-based thinking are hampering the implementation of the Goals. Institutional and policy coherence should be promoted together and be context-sensitive and inclusive. The promotion of coherence also requires structural attention and coordination and a broad range of tools, and might need specific work programmes or reforms. Furthermore, there is scope for a global peer-to-peer learning mechanism to support the necessary changes to structures, processes, skills and mindsets and to promote mutual learning, networking and the exchange of knowledge by all relevant stakeholders. In addition, national public administration schools and other training institutions should integrate the promotion of coherence for the Goals into their curricula.

100. Additional guidance on a common approach for planning, implementation, follow-up and reviews for countries and regions could be provided to encourage the application of integrated approaches and policy coherence. Strategic guidance by the high-level political forum could also be critical to addressing structural reforms to overcome poverty and inequality. Moreover, accelerating progress towards sustainable and resilient societies requires concerted and integrated action to ensure that the environment is considered and integrated into efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, by both governments and other relevant stakeholders.

Synergies and trade-offs

101. Guidance by the high-level political forum on how to harness synergies between the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and at the same time manage potential multisectoral, distributional and intertemporal trade-offs, was highlighted as critical in many submissions.

102. The high-level political forum should also encourage subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, including the regional commissions, to foster synergies and coherence with other existing relevant global processes. As some targets have a time frame for completion by 2020, the guidance of the forum is also sought with regard to possible ways to ensure continuous and amplified action beyond 2020 and maintaining policy coherence with any other global agenda-setting processes having authority on the relevant topics.

Best practices and lessons learned

103. Coordination and cooperation are key to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The role of the high-level political forum as a platform to share best practices and lessons learned was highlighted, including across the following areas:

(a) Mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals in policies and institutional frameworks;

(b) Mobilizing impactful financing in a balanced manner across the Goals, and establishing effective public participation mechanisms in budgetary processes;

(c) Encouraging and advocating for stronger inclusive partnerships;

(d) Leaving no one behind and addressing global inequality;

(e) Addressing the specific needs and experiences of countries in special situations.

Inclusive societies

104. The high-level political forum could provide an essential impetus for a strategic discussion on the issues of increasing discrimination, xenophobia and a lack of inclusion of some population groups, which remain topics of global concern, including for migrants and minorities associated with migration. Political guidance would be crucial to encourage positive action by governments and other relevant stakeholders to work towards inclusive societies. In that context, the forum should also highlight that migration is a topic that requires meaningful collaboration between a plethora of different actors.

Connecting people and upholding multilateralism

105. Leadership by the high-level political forum in terms of giving new impetus to multilateralism is considered critical to fostering sustainable and resilient societies. The convening power of the high-level political forum should be used to foster trust on the basis of mutual commitments and transparency, which is considered key to sustaining productive long-term engagements. Sharing best practices in wide consultation with civil society and other stakeholders, including the private sector, can inform policy decisions and strengthen implementation frameworks for the Sustainable Development Goals. It places emphasis on multilevel governance at national, local and community levels with the appropriate support of relevant regional and international networks.

Strong data and statistical systems

106. It has become evident that, without the necessary data, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and particularly its commitment to leave no one behind, cannot be realized. The high-level political forum could therefore provide guidance and support to the statistical community on how to:

(a) Ensure support at the national and international level;

(b) Establish a strong dialogue between the statistical and the political communities;

(c) Promote statistical capacity-building;

(d) Ensure the use of data by policymakers.

VI. Recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in establishing sustainable and resilient societies

107. A number of policy recommendations ensue from the above, and are set out in the paragraphs below.

108. The concept of leaving no one behind must be a core principle of public administration, be embedded in strategic frameworks and be translated into action not only by targeting specific groups but also by safeguarding the interests of those groups to prevent them from being pushed further behind.

109. It is critical to plan collaboratively, bring together relevant actors, encourage coherence of actions and make efficient use of available capacities to accelerate progress towards sustainable and resilient societies. That includes implementing mechanisms and incentives that empower and connect actors at all levels to enable coherent planning, the implementation of actions and learning. Pooling resources from diverse actors through multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize and share knowledge, including traditional and indigenous knowledge and knowledge on technology and finance, particularly for support to developing countries, is equally important.

110. It is important to ensure that macroeconomic and fiscal instruments work towards equitable, sustainable growth, job creation and the reduction of poverty and inequalities, including the extreme concentration of wealth. Building productive capacity through integrated policies, including industrial and rural development policies, and the development of human assets in support of inclusive development is critical. Implementing transformative social policies that combine basic universal frameworks with targeted actions, as well as pre-market, in-market, and post-market redistribution, are equally important.

111. Harnessing the benefits of advanced information and communications technologies for all and avoiding next-generation digital divides requires appropriate infrastructures, services and skills. While technology has great potential to advance inclusive development, it can also be at the root of national and international exclusion and inequality. Policymakers will also have to mitigate challenges in the areas of information security, privacy, employment and income inequality, while at the same time creating conditions for entrepreneurial innovation.

112. It is important to create a healthy environment in the context of sustainable development and in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity. It is essential to find mechanisms that internalize the economic and social externalities created by the degradation of the biosphere in order to inform decision-making processes. It is also critical to elaborate a common powerful narrative to communicate the biodiversity and ecological practices of communities in order to draw attention to their importance for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That narrative must be able to engage key stakeholders, including youth, business and the private sector, to become actors in the transformation towards resilient societies.

113. Sustainable cities depend on rural areas for the delivery of food, water, energy and other essential services. Maintaining a healthy link between rural and urban areas will require targeted policy instruments that shift agriculture practices to support a wider array of social, environmental and economic benefits that also address the current inequities of the rural-urban divide and the root causes of migration and instability. In much of the developing world, achieving more secure rights in terms of tenure, gender equality and social justice will be an essential step to improving the long-term stewardship of land resources.

114. Investing sustainably and inclusively in the transition to sustainable food and agriculture systems would support the resilience and well-being of both urban and rural populations. Transparent and well-functioning food and agricultural markets are essential for ensuring inclusive growth and sustainable consumption and production patterns. Small-scale food producers, family farmers, foresters, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and fisherfolk in rural, urban and peri-urban areas are critical agents of change that ensure the resilience of their communities, and their role needs to be recognized. Their integration into markets and value chains is crucially important. Mainstreaming resilience in all segments of value-chain development act as a complement to integrating approaches at the country level.

115. Frequent and intense water-related disasters and climate variability and change are fundamental threats to water security. National policies need to enable increased visibility of future risks and limitations through multilevel and multi-stakeholder dialogue so as to increase preparedness and resilience among communities.

116. Investing in resilience can be an accelerator that allows progression on various Sustainable Development Goals simultaneously. It involves acknowledging the cost-effectiveness of nature-based solutions in lieu of or as a complement to engineered solutions. It will also require taking effective action on international cooperation with regard to taxes, cross-border financial flows, migration and remittances, debt relief and trade.

117. Research, scientific knowledge and information provide a basis for sound policymaking and sustainable solutions. Reliable, disaggregated data and information systems and sharing should be improved across the breadth of the Sustainable Development Goals. That requires addressing complexities in measuring and reporting on multidisciplinary indicators. The link between statistics and policy should be strengthened.

118. The United Nations system should work together, beyond silos, to effectively support sustainable and resilient societies. Emphasis should be placed on the longer-term development of capacities, even if they are harder to quantify and require more time. Moreover, cooperation among existing multilateral agreements, regulations and programmes should be promoted to harness the potential of synergies for the implementation of those agreements.